

# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **Nebraska Department of Natural Resources**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Areas Added to Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP**

The Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency today are announcing the addition of the Lodgepole Creek, South Platte and upper Pumpkin Creek areas to the priority areas eligible to participate in the Nebraska Platte-Republican Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The announcement is being made at Sidney, Nebraska at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The Nebraska Platte-Republican Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program was the first CREP of its kind in the nation. It was initiated in 2005 through a Memorandum of Agreement signed by Governor Heineman and the U.S. Farm Service Agency and its goal was to convert 100,000 acres of irrigated lands to grass or similar habitat cover, to reduce the amount of irrigated water consumption, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and improve water quality by reducing sediment and agricultural chemicals from entering the water. There had been CREPs prior to 2005, but none had included the purpose of reducing water consumption. Currently there are about 50,000 acres under the Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP.

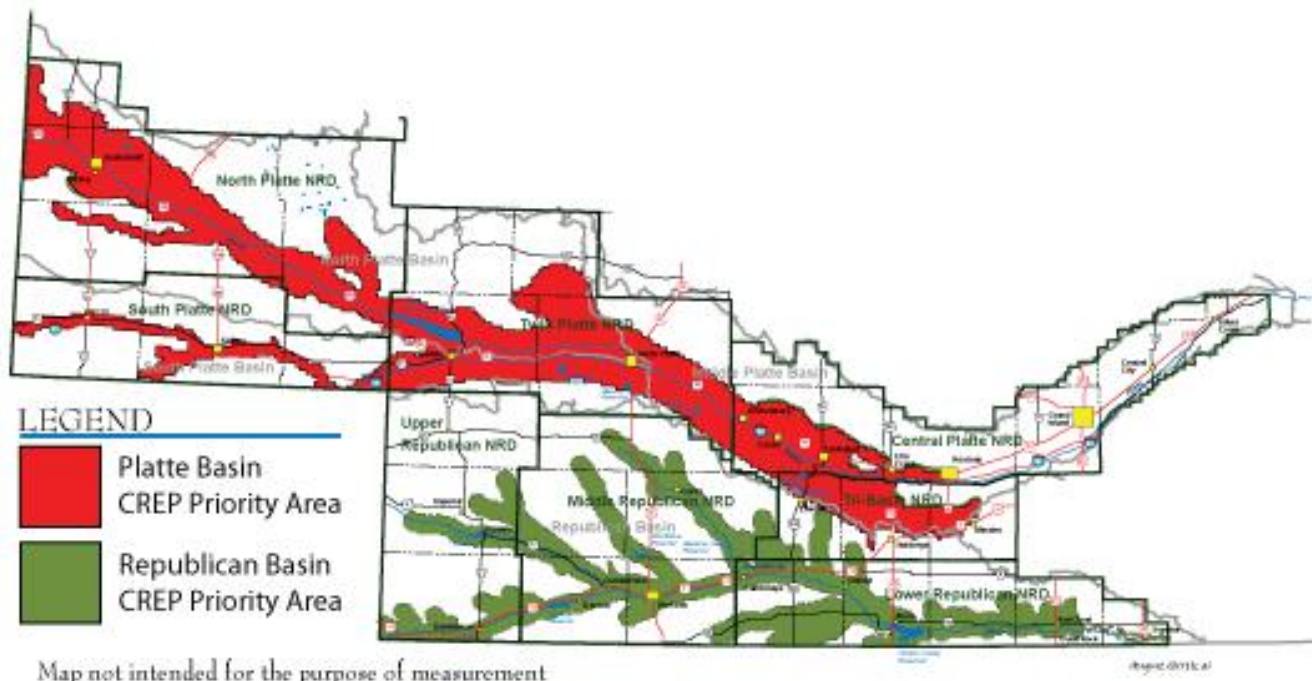
The Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP is an additional tool for the farmer to use and also a tool for the State of Nebraska as a means of reducing water use in areas where the State has interstate compacts, decrees, or agreements that require a reduction in water use and in areas of the State where there are conflicts between water users and the State has determined the areas are fully or overappropriated.

The Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP is a voluntary program for landowners. Landowners can sign up for the program if their land is included in the priority areas and they are able to meet certain criteria. Landowners enter into contracts with the federal government and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources for ten to fifteen years in exchange for an annual payment that approximates current irrigation rental rates. New rental rates are effective in

certain areas. Landowners also receive financial assistance for the cost of establishing the habitat cover on the land. Nebraska and the federal government receive contractual assurance that the lands under contract are not irrigated during the period of the contract and that the water previously used for irrigation is not used on other lands or for other purposes. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources committed to pay up to five million dollars for its share of habitat establishment costs over a period of years. The federal cost over the contract period is estimated at 158 million dollars.

Individuals who have Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP contracts now may also apply to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to amend their contracts to allow them to enter into easements with local natural resources districts to permanently retire the irrigation on lands under the contracts. Such easements would go into effect immediately following the expiration of the CREP contract.

(CREP area map attached)



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